

# Chapter 2

## Where to Get Food



# Healthy Food Sources

## There are many ways to get healthy food:

- Supermarkets, regional grocery stores
- Natural food stores
- Food cooperatives and buying clubs
- Big-box stores
- Corner markets
- Directly from farmers
  - Farmers' Markets
  - Community Supported Agriculture Farms (CSAs)
  - Farm Stands
- Food banks
- Home and community gardens

This chapter discusses how to find the highest quality of food available for the lowest cost from each of these sources.

Not all of these options are available to everyone. We hope this chapter helps you to do the best you can with the food sources you have. If we all make the best choices we can, the entire food system will improve over time.



I like whole grains.



## A Few General Tips for Saving Money on Your Food

- Make a shopping list and stick to it.
- Check what is in your refrigerator before you go shopping. Use that food, whether it's leftovers or still-fresh food that has not yet been used.
- Don't shop when you're hungry.

**Did you know** that 15-20 percent of the food we bring home is wasted? We throw out leftovers and let food go bad before we even use it.



# Grocery Stores

Grocery stores come in many varieties: supermarkets, regional grocery stores, co-ops and natural food stores. Wherever you shop, there are some common elements.

## For Healthier Options

- Shop the outside walls. In most markets, this is where the freshest food is found—fruits, vegetables, meat, poultry, fish, dairy products, fresh-baked goods and bulk foods.
- Reduce shopping in the center of the store, which usually has packaged, highly processed food.

## To Save Money

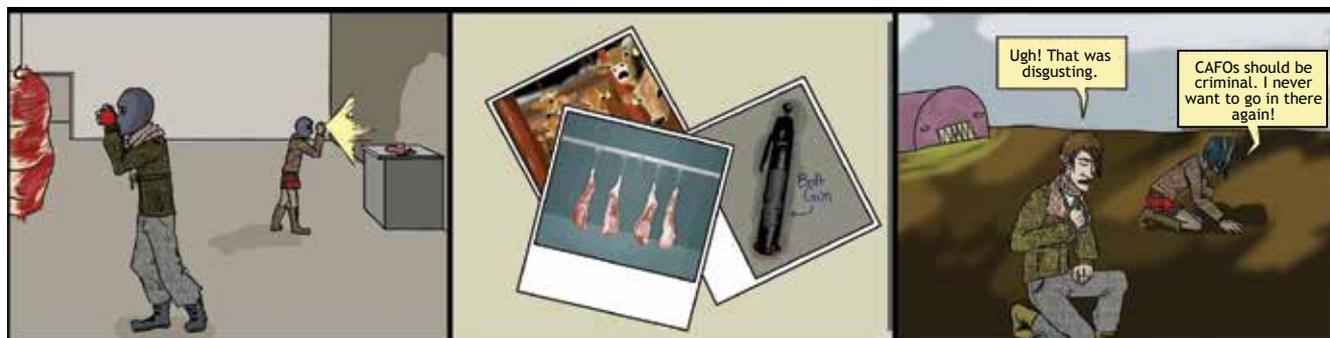
- Buy fruits and vegetables in season.
- Buy generic or store brands; they usually cost less and are often identical to “national” brands.
- Stock up on necessary items when they are on sale, then freeze, dehydrate or can fresh food when possible.
- Check the shelf label for the unit price—the price per ounce or pound. Larger packages are usually less expensive per unit, but not always!
- Buy only needed quantities of meat and other perishable foods.
- Buy block cheese and slice it yourself.
- Roast your own lunch meats. Example: cook a turkey breast or a whole chicken; use the meat in lunches.
- Look at food on the top and bottom shelves. Items at eye level on shelves are often the most expensive.
- Buy from bulk bins. Items are usually less expensive.

## What is a Co-op Grocery Store?

- A food cooperative (co-op) is a grocery store owned and directed by its members. Their focus is to make organic and whole foods more affordable. Most co-ops are open to everyone, not just members. A recent listing showed about 400 co-ops or buying clubs throughout the U.S. Local food is usually easier to find in a co-op.
- In a co-op, organic food is:
  - More easily found than in a supermarket
  - Often less expensive than in a supermarket.

## Buying Clubs

A buying club is a form of co-op that’s usually made up of a small group of families or households in search of a better or more economical method of purchasing food or other items. To locate one or find out how to start one, go to [www.coopdirectory.org](http://www.coopdirectory.org)



# Why Buy in Bulk?

Supermarkets, regional grocery stores, co-ops and natural food stores usually have food sold from bulk bins.

- Bulk foods are less expensive. You could pay 50 percent less for peanut butter and up to 70 percent less for popcorn if you buy in bulk.
- Bulk items are often fresher than packaged items.
- Dry bulk foods (beans, grains, rice, flour, or dried fruit) store well.
- Organic bulk items are generally available for the same or lower price than packaged conventional items.
- Bulk buying eliminates packaging, which reduces waste.



## Cost Comparison\* Granola



**Bulk**

**27¢ per ounce**



**Packaged**

**44¢ per ounce**

**Or Homemade (page 149)**

**18¢ per ounce**

\*Prices vary. Estimate based on nationwide chain grocery store generic brands, 2012



I did some research on CAFOs, and besides being cruelly treated, animals are forced to eat food that makes them sick, then they're given antibiotics which are needed because of the crowded and unsanitary conditions they live in.

I found out that because of the heavy use of antibiotics in livestock, antibiotics are becoming less effective in humans.

Let's do something about this.

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# Grocery Store Scavenger Hunt

Let the kids learn about what they're eating while you shop together. Use the Scavenger Hunt ideas below or make up your own. Arrange the clues in the order you move through the store. Additional games are available on the Locally Delicious website: [www.locally-delicious.org/publications/lunchbox-envy](http://www.locally-delicious.org/publications/lunchbox-envy). Find link to bottom right of book image.



1 Comes in green, red, purple, orange and yellow. Can be stuffed with vegetables, cheese or meat.

2 Summer fruit that is round or oval, sweet and moist on the inside; many varieties.

3 Grows underground. Usually dark red, gold or candy-striped. Baked or boiled, eaten in salads or made into a soup called borscht.

4 Count the local vegetables and fruits. What is in season now? Hint: Check shelf signs or stickers for origins.

5 Find the peanut butter with the fewest ingredients. Why do you think it is healthier than the brands with more ingredients?

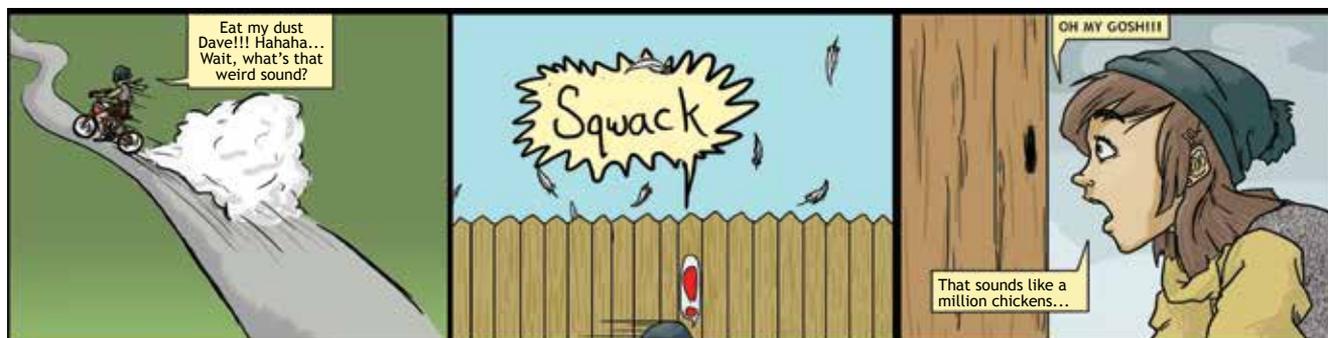
6 It's loaded with calcium, and you can drink it plain or put it on cereal.

7 Feeds more people worldwide than any other grain. Comes in white and brown, long grain or short.

8 Can be sliced, diced, grated or melted. Made out of milk, but it's not liquid.

9 Find a bread made with four or more different grains. What are they?

Answers: 1-bell peppers; 2-melons; 3-beets; 4-no preservatives, just real food; 5-milk; 6-rice; 7-rice; 8-cheese; 9 and 9 are specific to your shopping trip



# Tips for Shopping at Big-box Stores

## For Healthier Items

- Big-box stores that sell fresh food often have organic choices—if so, take advantage of the savings.

## To Save Money

- Price savings can be large, but it's easy to buy too much, as items are often pre-packaged in large quantities.
- Have a strategy for using the food before it goes bad, or preserve it by freezing, refrigerating, cooking or dehydrating for a longer life.
- Shop with a friend and split up packages that are too large for either of you individually.



## Cooking with Friends

When I lived in Elk Grove, I belonged to a Moms' Club chapter. Once a month, we got together and made meals to freeze for the upcoming month.

Everyone had a signature recipe that all the kids liked, and we found recipes online and in cookbooks. We planned the menus during our kids' weekly play dates and divided up the shopping between us.

On "Cooking Day" (usually a Sunday), we would arrive at the designated host's house in the morning with empty containers and lots of ingredients, and leave with anywhere from 5 to 10 meals each. It was a great day of fun and friendship, and everyone went home with dinner ready to be put into the oven and an array of things for the freezer to have on hand for the next month.

Ginny Prince  
Mother of two girls, aged 8 and 12



# Buying at a Farmers' Market

Buying directly from a local farmer ensures that the food is in season. Money goes into the local community—a dollar spent with a local producer has three times the economic benefit to a community as a dollar spent for food grown outside the area.

## Farmers' Markets

America has seen a rebirth of local organic farms selling directly to consumers. Currently more than 7,000 farmers' markets operate in the U.S.



## To Save Money

- Bargain with the farmers. Many farmers reduce prices at the end of the day.
- Ask farmers for quantity discounts, and share with others.
- Ask if damaged produce (example: an apple with blemishes) can be marked down.
- Take advantage of farmers' markets that accept WIC and SNAP (EBT). See page 21.

Some farmers at farmers' markets sell produce that may not be certified organic, but may exceed the legal requirements for certification. Organic certification is an expense that many small farmers can't afford. But if you know the farmer, you'll probably trust him or her to tell you whether the food is organic.

## Why Shop at a Farmers' Market

- Kids love them.
- It's fun and a great way to stay connected with your community.
- The produce is seasonal, usually local and organic.
- The food tastes better. Imported produce is bred for travel hardiness, not taste, and is generally harvested before it's ripe. Compare the taste of a local tomato picked at peak ripeness with a typical supermarket variety.
- There are many more varieties of fruit and vegetables. Instead of one kind of tomato in July, there could be 20! Learn about foods you may not have seen before.
- Animal products sold at farmers' markets are not from CAFOs (factory farms).



# Buying at the Farm

## Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Farms

CSA members purchase shares in the farm at the start of the season and receive a box or bag of fresh food each week during the season.

- Buying a CSA share lowers the costs for fresh, organic food.
- CSAs provide an educational opportunity. If children learn how their food is grown they are more likely to eat it.
- CSAs make it easy to eat seasonally.
- CSAs provide opportunities to experiment with new foods.
- CSAs support and extend local food production and help the local economy.

Discounts may be available in exchange for work time on the farm.



## Farm Stands

- Farm stands are generally next to the farm that grows the food and are most commonly found in rural areas.
- Food is fresh and visiting a farm is a great adventure!
- Some farms have the option to let you pick your own food.
- Prices may be lower than in grocery stores.



# What Programs Are There to Help?

About 50 million Americans do not know where their next meal is coming from and experience food insecurity. Programs are available to help, but many people do not use them. Use of these programs is encouraged to help families be healthier.

## WIC and SNAP

- New rules make it easier to qualify, and government agencies encourage their use.
- Organic choices are available with WIC coupons and SNAP EBT cards. See sidebar.
- EBT cards and WIC coupons can be used to buy fresh produce at many farmers' markets. If your state does not provide this option, talk with your local representative and let them know you want it.
- WIC and SNAP bring money into local communities.

## Food Banks

- Local food banks often have information on how to create healthy meals using the food bank foods.
- If the food bank doesn't have local, fresh items, ask the director if there are farms with whom they can work. There may be opportunities for gleaning or direct purchase of food.
- Ask what special programs are available. Many food banks have become very innovative. As an example, Food for People in Humboldt County partners with Locally Delicious, Inc., St. Joseph Hospital Foundation and community members to hire local farmers to grow food specifically for the food bank. Clients of the food bank get the freshest food and the local farm economy benefits.
- If you don't need a food bank, please support the important activities of these organizations through donations or volunteer work.

## WIC

**(Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children)** provides federal grants to states for supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education for low-income pregnant, breast feeding, and non-breast feeding postpartum women, and to infants and children up to age five who are found to be at nutritional risk.

## SNAP

**(Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)** is the new name for the Food Stamp program. Each state may have a different name. For example, it is called CalFresh in California. Clients receive an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card that can be used at grocery stores and many farmers' markets.



# How to Maximize Options in a Food Desert

Some communities don't have grocery stores, but have convenience stores, small corner markets or liquor stores that carry food. These communities are called "food deserts." These sources do not have a wide choice of fresh food and prices are often high.

## Healthy Eating in a Food Desert

- Buy the healthiest items available, such as dairy, produce, bread, tortillas, packaged beans, rice and canned vegetables.
- Encourage the store owner to offer more fresh produce.
- Participate in a community garden.
- Grow food in your garden or in containers. Some ideas for getting started are in Chapter 6, page 182.
- Join or form a community food project. <http://apps.ams.usda.gov/fooddeserts/>
- Check out what the Market Maker Team is doing in South Central Los Angeles to green the food desert, one corner store at a time. The site has many ideas including videos for kids. [www.marketmakeovers.org](http://www.marketmakeovers.org)

If you don't live in a food desert, support community efforts to make healthy food available to everyone.

## Making Change in Food Deserts

Food Deserts are places where there is a lack of healthy, fresh, affordable and culturally appropriate food. Sadly, there is an overabundance of highly processed and fast foods. West Oakland, California, has been described as a food desert. For over 30,000 residents there are more than 50 liquor stores and fast food chains, but only one small produce market on the outskirts of the community.

Healthy food should be available to everyone regardless of race, class or neighborhood.

The People's Grocery, a community-based organization, supports a grass-roots movement fighting to improve the health and economy of West Oakland. They work to ensure that the community plays a large part in the revitalization of neighborhoods. Learn more about the organization and see some great videos of their work at [www.peoplesgrocery.org](http://www.peoplesgrocery.org)



# Grow Your Own Food

Raising food in a home garden or a community garden has gained in popularity over the last few years. There are more than 18,000 community gardens in the U.S. today. During World War II, up to 40 percent of all produce was grown at home in what were called Victory Gardens.

- Food from the garden is freshest and tastes the best.
- Because it is fresh, it is higher in nutrients.
- It can save money.
- A large amount of food can be grown in a small space.
- Children are more likely to eat food they have grown themselves.



Chapter 6 has ideas for growing your own food, including growing in containers or in a small garden space. Grow food for the recipes that your children like. If you don't have room for a garden at home, take a space in a community garden.



# How to Help Improve Our Food System

Everyone deserves healthy food. Be an active consumer and ask the grocer questions. Make a positive change! Change happens when people demand it. Vote with your dollars.

Ask the owners of the corner stores if they will carry more produce.

Ask the grocer:

- “Will you carry more organic fruits, vegetables, dairy and meat?”
- “Is the beef grass-fed?” and “Are the poultry pasture-raised and the eggs from pasture-raised chickens?”
- “Would you label food with country, state or county of origin? Can you show which local farm has grown it? Can you buy from local farmers?”

## Buying Local

Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food. Food security will increase if the food system becomes more local and each community produces much of its own food, as was the case before the 1940s and again when there were Victory Gardens.

- Having local farms all across the country creates more food security, as crops are well suited to each climate. The diversity of seed makes the food system less likely to be destroyed by a single pest (insect, fungus or bacteria).
- Having many sources of food grown all over the country adds security in case one area is hit by droughts or floods.
- Industrially produced food travels an average of 1,500 miles from farm to table and uses lots of fuel that adds CO<sub>2</sub> to the atmosphere.
- A greater variety of locally grown foods makes for a more interesting diet.
- Local food is automatically in-season and will be fresher and taste better.

Please support your local food system with your dollars by buying locally.

## What about food that can't be grown in the U.S.?

Some foods we just can't give up. For these, buy products labeled Fairtrade if you can. It contributes to sustainable development and helps protect farm workers around the world.

For example, some cacao is harvested using slave labor—sometimes by children. If you buy Fairtrade chocolate, you are assured that it is NOT from slave labor.

